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CBC Newsletter

ISSN No. 0162-7120

For members of the Carolina Bird Club, Inc., Ornithological Society of the Carolinas

Volume 57 June 2011 Number 3

Fall Meeting on the South Carolina Coast

Don Faulkner

If you are looking for a unique location to bird where a second language is spoken (Gullah), where churches and mansions built as far back as the 1720s are still standing after having been exposed to hurricanes, floods, fires and civil war, where the region has been touched by the cultures of the American Indian, Spanish, French, English and Gullah; then you should plan on joining us at the CBC Fall Meeting in history-rich Beaufort, South Carolina.

The dates for our meeting are September 29th through October 1st. Our headquarters are located at the Quality Inn at Town Center, located at 2001 Boundary Street in downtown Beaufort. The hotel is situated just a few blocks from the historic section of town. The Quality Inn has plenty of room for our meetings, registration, and the Saturday night buffet. The CBC rates for rooms are $59.99 for king or queen and $49.99 for a double (not including taxes). The king and queen rooms include a microwave and a fridge. All rooms have complimentary Wi-Fi connection, and there is a computer available for guest use in the lobby. These rates will be available two days before and two days after the meeting for club members.

The Saturday buffet will be $21.93 per person and include Low Country shrimp boil, pulled pork BBQ, collard greens, red beans & rice, Southern-style coleslaw and Pecan pie.

To reserve your room, call the Quality Inn at 843-524-2144. Breakfast and lunch are served at Fryed Green Tomatoes located next door to the hotel. While not owned by the hotel, they are closely associated with the Quality Inn and will be in charge of the Saturday night buffet for the meeting.

For the Thursday and Friday evening meals, there are many excellent locally owned restaurants in this area. Details will be available in the registration area.

If you have been thinking about bringing a non-birding guest to a meeting, then this is a great opportunity. You can take the walking tour of the mansions or ride in a horse drawn carriage, visit art galleries, go kayaking, go shopping, visit the Arsenal, pick up some handmade chocolates, take a walk on the town's waterfront, or go to one of the many islands that are known for their beaches, huge Live Oak trees and lighthouses. The film locations for a number of well-known movies are dotted around Beaufort and include 'Forrest Gump', 'Prince of Tides', 'The Big Chill', and 'The Great Santini'.

Birding opportunities are plentiful. Bear Island WMA, Donnelly WMA, Pinckney Island, Hunting Island, Hilton Head Island, and the Savannah NWR are among the planned field trip locations. Some of the target species that we hope to see are Painted Bunting, Bald Eagle, Glossy Ibis, Black-bellied Whistling-Duck, Anhinga, American Oystercatcher and Purple Gallinule along with the expected bitterns, egrets, herons and ducks.....the list will be a long one.

A registration form, more meeting details, and trip descriptions will be included in the next Newsletter. Make your hotel reservations soon, put on some suntan oil, pack your bins, and come on down to the Low Country for a lot of fun and a lot of birding!

CBC Newsletter (USPS# 023-534), June 2011, Volume 57, Number 3. Published bimonthly by the Carolina Bird Club, Inc., 353 Montabello, Bloomingdale, IL 60108-1037. **POSTMASTER:** Send address changes to *CBC Newsletter*, Carolina Bird Club, Inc., 1809 Lakepark Drive, Raleigh, NC 27612.

To See a Crane

Steve Shultz

Five hundred thousand birds. Eighty percent of the world's population of Sandhill Cranes in one place and mostly at the same time. Clouds of grey rising from corn stubble against scudding snow clouds.

Considered among nature's greatest migration spectacles, these astonishing sights occur daily in March along the Platte River in central Nebraska where most of the continent's Sandhill Cranes stage during spring migration.

Leaving wintering territories in the South and Southwest, groups of cranes numbering in the scores, hundreds, or thousands converge on a stretch of the Platte River between Grand Island and the town of North Platte. By the time the migration peaks, usually in late March, sandbars and shallows along the wide, shallow, braided river are literally covered in cranes standing shoulder to shoulder.

The cranes spend the lengthening early-spring/late-winter days foraging on waste grain in the ubiquitous corn fields that blanket south-central Nebraska. Usually flying no more than ten miles north or south of the river, the birds add twenty-five percent of their body weight in fat, preparing for long flights to breeding grounds as far away as Siberia. When dark approaches, groups of cranes begin lifting off from the fields in a symphony of bugling calls and a "snowfall" of downy white feathers. They make the short flight to the Platte and slowly, in groups of three, ten or twenty, form islands of birds in the shallow, gently flowing river. The Platte provides protection from predators, Bobcats and Coyotes being especially fond of the "rib-eye in the sky", so here the birds spend the cold Nebraska nights awaiting another chance to build fat reserves at dawn's light.

National Geographic magazine recently featured a cover story on great animal migrations, exploring the annual movements of creatures great and small. And while the average American may have difficulty in accumulating the capital and time to witness the spectacle of the African Wildebeest migration, or the patience to observe the Monarch Butterflies' slow movements, visiting the Sandhill Cranes of the Platte River is a somewhat more attainable excursion, but no less spectacular.

Our small group of three, unable to cross the pond to the Dark Continent, was able to trade enough frequent flyer miles with American Airlines to find ourselves in Omaha, Nebraska on March 22. The plan: participate in one of the United States' iconic birding events, try to scare up a Harris's Sparrow (the only likely "life bird" for any of us), and try to stay out of trouble (defined as, but not limited to: speeding tickets, encounters with unruly rattlesnakes, vehicular mishaps, and electrocution). Considering the temperature will not rise much above 35 degrees at any point during the trip, the rattlesnake danger is virtually nil, electrocution will be another matter.

Our first encounter with the cranes comes near Grand Island as we race west on I-80. Clouds of birds on the horizon announce our arrival in "the crane zone", and an excursion away from Eisenhower's dream takes us among cornfields and between flocks of Sandhills numbering in the thousands. For the next several hours we see more of the same; hundreds, thousands, of cranes flying overhead, standing in fields, dancing with spread wings.

In the fields filled with grey cranes, birders hope to see something white, for the world's population of wild Whooping Cranes also passes through the Platte Valley while migrating to Wood Buffalo National Park in Canada. Although April is more conducive to seeing whoopers, the early vanguard of the migration may appear in late March, so it pays to keep the proverbial eye out. While scanning a flock of cranes feeding alongside I-80, we spot something resembling a white bird. At speed, identification can be tricky. Plastic bags look awfully like birds, and bags seem to prefer the same cornfields the cranes enjoy. Interstate exits being about as rare as whoopers in this part of Nebraska, it takes twenty minutes to get back to the flock. Indeed there is a white bird among the grey… and it is a leucistic Sandhill Crane. We wonder how many birder-piloted vehicles screeched to a halt along this stretch of pavement, fooled by the white Sandhill, which we later discover has been favoring this road-side location for the past couple of weeks.

A few hours later, after a wrong turn, we find our prize. There, standing in yet another cornfield, a majestic Whooping Crane towers above Sandhills. We realize this is most likely the Whooping Crane that wintered in northwestern Texas with Sandhill Cranes, thus migrating "early" with the Sandhills instead of later with the main population of Whooping Cranes. We've found a needle in a haystack, one out of 500,000 birds!

So we've been in Nebraska for one day, seen tens of thousands of cranes, found a whooper, and encountered a couple of Harris's Sparrows. What more to do? Well, for most birders visiting the Platte in the spring, the nightly fly-in of cranes to the river is the main attraction. Visitors can watch from roadsides, bridges, or designated crane viewing

sites, but many opt to visit a blind for closer views. This evening we have reservations at the Nebraska Nature & Visitor Center's riverside blind. Arriving at 6 p.m. for a short introductory multimedia presentation on the cranes, we caravan the mile to the river and walk the short distance to the metal boxes perched atop the bluff on the north side of the Platte. Snow pellets begin to fall, with increasing intensity, as we walk, and look at that... lightning! Big Great Plains strokes of lightning hitting the ground not so far away. Did I mention the blinds are metal? Did I mention they sit atop a bluff? I ask the guide if the blinds are grounded against lightning and he looks at me with an uncomprehending stare. This might be more exciting than we planned for.

Fortunately the lightning passes mostly to our south, no one is electrocuted, and other than the snow, we have little to distract us from the thousands of cranes staging along the

Cranes at the Rowe Sanctuary

river. My favorite sight is of birds "parachuting" to a landing spot with head and neck held high, long spindly legs dangling below, and broad wings cupped against the air.

We learn to tell the difference between the bugling call of the adults and the sounds made by the young birds, which are called "colts". The colts sound like a referee's whistle with a marble stuck in it, and once you make the connection, identifying the age of a calling bird is a cinch.

While watching the cranes come in to roost for the evening can be impressive (we found the blind to be a little farther from the birds than we expected) some say that watching the birds depart from the river in the morning is the quintessential crane experience. Accordingly, we have reservations for the morning fly-away, this time at the famous Rowe Sanctuary near the town of Kearney. Awakening to a blanket of new snow, we join dozens of others in the predawn at the Ian Nicholson Audubon Center at Rowe Sanctuary to experience the cranes. Rowe features a number of blinds strategically placed right along the river's banks. Unlike last evening, the birds are but a stone's throw away and impressive in their numbers. Islands of Sandhill Cranes cover the river's course for as far as one can see east and west. As dawn gradually filters into the foggy darkness, rafts of ducks float along with the current, serenaded by increasingly emphatic crane song. Individual cranes welcome the morning by flapping and stretching wings or briefly displaying with pointed bills and vertical leaps that would impress the most jaded NBA aficionado. The fog and clouds may be keeping the birds on the river longer than they might otherwise, but a well-timed overflight by a Bald Eagle scatters most of the cranes along our stretch of the Platte, creating that definitive birding moment, that memory permanently etched, of thousands of Sandhill Cranes taking flight at once.

The cranes are what attract most birders to the Platte Valley in spring, but other avian attractions beckon too. Visitors in early March may encounter impressive numbers of migrating waterfowl including a significant portion of the continent's Greater White-fronted Goose population. By the time of our visit most of these birds are gone, and we see a total of only ten Snow Geese, two Ross's Geese, and six "speckle bellies".

While the geese and ducks are mainly gone, the other star of the Nebraska birding show, the Greater Prairie-Chicken, is not. Just north of Grand Island, publically accessible sites on the Taylor Ranch afford road-side viewing of lekking chickens. While we arrive in the area well after ten in the morning, birds are still on and near the lek, possibly convinced to stay around by the low clouds and fog. Continuing north, we near the town of Burwell where a group of twenty-five chickens poke along in a field adjacent to a boat repair business. Even at 2 p.m. one or two of the males inflates his yellow air sacs, strikes a Madonna-esque pose, and stakes a claim to this square of grass.

For visiting birders who really want to enjoy the Greater Prairie-Chicken displays, or the iconic dance of the Sharp-tailed Grouse, a visit to the Switzer Ranch is a must. Trading under the name of Calamus Outfitters, the wonderful folks at Switzer provide us with lodging, meals, and viewing opportunities to watch lekking birds from private blinds. After dinner in the main lodge, we retire to a cozy cabin, shelter from the two inches of snow that falls overnight. In the morning we find ourselves in a retired school bus that found new life as a birding blind. On the hill just yards away, as they have been doing for centuries, Sharp-

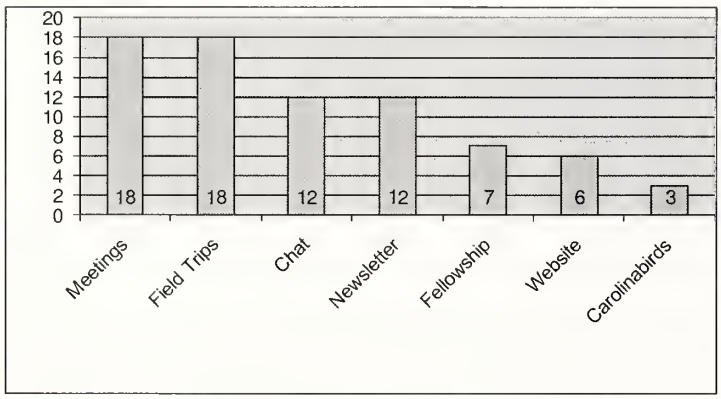
(Continued on page 9)

Carolina Bird Club Survey Results

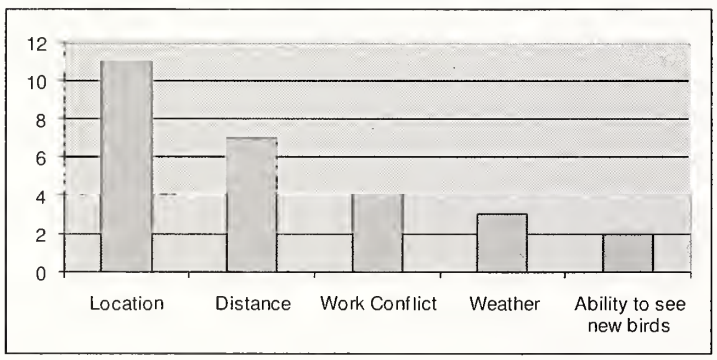
The December 2010 edition of the CBC Newsletter featured a short member survey designed to gain insight to specific questions as well as identify trends in members opinions regarding Club operation and offerings. The survey page was grouped with the winter meeting registration form in hopes that folks attending the meeting would find it easy to also complete the survey at the time the registration form was submitted, but those not attending the meeting were also encouraged to respond.

Thirty-one surveys were returned, and the consolidated results of those responses are shown below.

Question #1: What do you value the most about Club membership? (some items you may consider include The Chat, The Newsletter, website, meetings, field trip offerings, etc.)

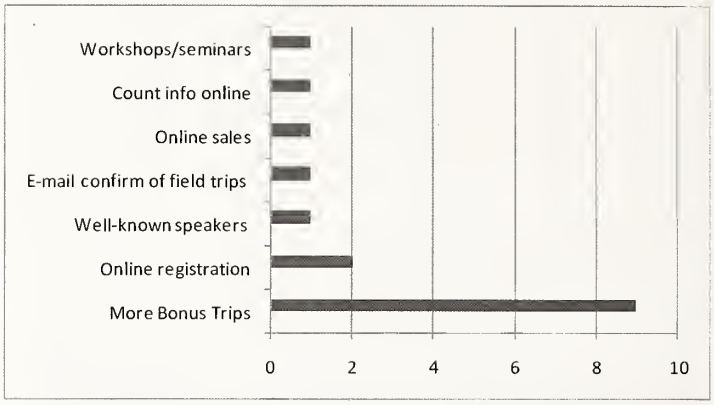


Question #2: What is the most important factor in your choice to attend a seasonal meeting, or if you do not attend regularly, what keeps you from attending?

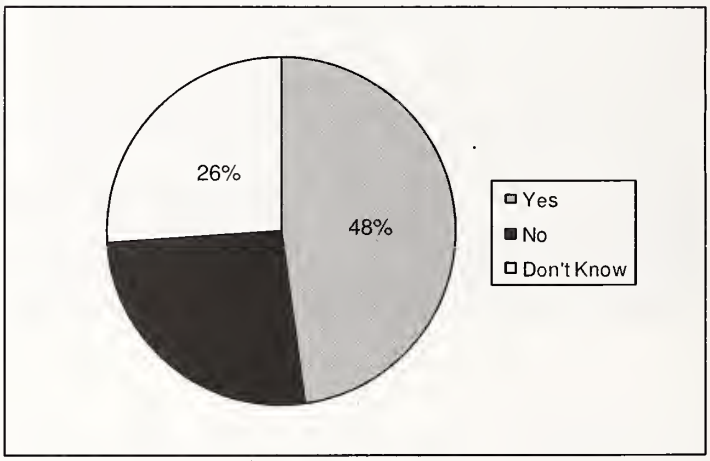


Single responses were received for the following: chance to see new places, expertise of leaders, cost to travel, dates, conflict with football/other birding events.

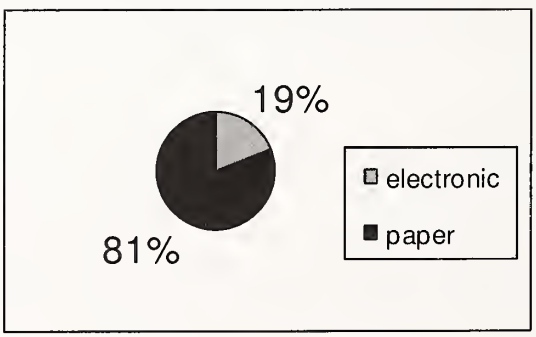
Question #3: What offerings would you like to see that are not currently made available by the Club?



Question #4: Do you feel that it is easy for Club members to have a voice in the operation of the organization?



Question #5: Do you prefer to receive information from the Club electronically, via the website or e-mail, or by mail through the Newsletter and The Chat?



Birder's Book Review: The Crossley ID Guide Eastern Birds

Steve Shultz

The Crossley ID Guide Eastern Birds
Richard Crossley
529 pages Flexibound
Princeton University Press 2011
ISBN 978-0-691-14778-9

I glanced up at "that" bookshelf the other day. The one with the bird guides. Five linear feet of bird guides. How on Earth would I rationalize yet another edition to a shelf that is already sagging from the weight of thousands of pages? It would take something really different. Not another photo guide, not another guide with great line drawings… something else. Something different.

The Crossley ID Guide is not just another bird guide, it is an entirely different way of approaching bird identification. Instead of pages with drawings or photos on neutral backgrounds, the Guide features 640 "scenes". Each scene portrays the habitat most associated with the species in question and features anywhere from one to more than twenty photos of the bird. Generally if the bird displays differing juvenile/gender/adult plumages, representative photos of each are shown, but don't expect a line-up of plumages from juvenile to breeding male arranged in a neat line. Instead, the photos are meant to capture the birds as they look in nature, not as they look on a flat sheet of paper.

The book includes 660 species, nearly all that are likely to be found in the East, and over 10,000 photos, of which more than 99% were taken by the author. The goal of the book, and the way that it differs from what you likely have in your rucksack right now, is to provide birders with a "search image" for each species, showing how the birds really appear when encountered on an outing. After all, we all know that if birds were front and center, in good light, and showing all relevant ID features, as most are shown in field guides, then bird identification would not be that great of a trick. But they don't. They hide in thick foliage, fly away, fly across, and peek out from behind inconveniently placed sticks. The Crossley book attempts to show each bird in the way that it is most likely to be seen.

For common birds, a full page is dedicated to each species. Less common or rare birds may share space on a single page. Nearly 3/4 of each page is dedicated to the scenes. Crossley notes in the preface that he is not a fan of text, and stays true to this throughout the book. Below the scene Crossley gives the names, 4-letter banding code, length (no weights), a tiny range map, and one or two paragraphs of concise text. The range maps are small, and some will likely bemoan their Lilliputian size, but they are on the same page with the birds, unlike some guides. The book generally follows current taxonomy, but varies when the author feels it more convenient to portray similar species together, hence this is one of the books that shows something other than House Sparrow as the last entry.

The results are impressive, but not all scenes create an equal impact. The nightjars and some others are represented by very dark scenes. The Eastern Whip-poor-will and Long-eared Owls can barely be seen, something that I hope is changed in future versions. But for the most part, the scenes work. The portrayal of Grey-cheeked and Swainson's Thrushes is the best representation I have seen of the differences between the two species.

In my opinion the warblers and sparrows are where the book really shines; the scenes do a great job of showing birders how these often confusing, and in many cases similar, birds appear when

(Continued on page 9)

Trip to Huntington Beach S.P. and Santee Coastal Reserve

Paul Serridge

A total of 14 CBC members birded Huntington Beach State park on Saturday, March 19th. High tide was around 7:40 that morning. My experience has been that the best chance of finding roosting shorebirds in the jetty area is within a couple of hours of high tide, and so we headed up the beach towards the jetty. Immediately after we hit the beach we spotted a Northern Gannet and an American Oystercatcher flying by and a Red-throated Loon on the ocean – a good start to the day! In fact, we did not see any more of those 3 species all weekend. Half-way up the beach we took the path through the dunes to go to the sandy point immediately to the west of the jetty. From the edge of the fenced-off shorebird nesting area we spotted two Wilson's Plovers, the first "lifers" of the day, and, shortly afterwards, a pair of Horned Grebes on the inlet.

We found a large flock of mixed shorebirds roosting at the point: Semipalmated, Black-bellied, and Wilson's Plovers, Western Sandpipers, Dunlin, Short-billed Dowitchers, Sanderlings, and Ruddy Turnstones. By approaching the birds slowly and carefully we were able to get close enough to get good looks at all species and to compare the characteristics of similar species. One of the birders said it was a great "Shorebird ID 101" class. The Wilson's Plovers repeatedly stood erect on higher ground looking for all the world like sentinels! We did not find either Piping Plovers (I had found 5 there the previous day) or Least Sandpipers (which I had also seen the previous day, but at the south end of Litchfield Beach).

We then walked the length of the jetty – a few Common Loons, Double-crested Cormorants, and Bonaparte's Gulls but no Purple Sandpipers. This was my third visit to the jetty in a week and I think that the Purple Sandpipers had all left the area. We did find an unusual species on the jetty rocks – two Common Yellowthroats! On the walk back south along the beach we found a single Piping Plover that very cooperatively posed for photographs.

After a picnic lunch we checked out Sandpiper Pool. Virginia Rails and a Sora had been reported there recently on Carolinabirds, but all we found were the usual Pied-billed Grebes, moorhens, and coots. The feeders at the Education Center had no birds, but from the boardwalk a Clapper Rail was very briefly spotted as it disappeared into the reeds.

We birded Mullet Pond from the Causeway, but the lake was not very birdy: a single Lesser Scaup and a few shovelers and Blue-winged Teal. We also heard a Clapper Rail from the Causeway. By this time (around 2 p.m.) it was really hot - around 80F - and no clouds. We were happy to find some shade on the Kerrigan Nature Trail and the Atalaya Carriageway. Ducks were again few and far between on Mallard Pond on the south side of the Carriageway, and we did not find the Black-crowned Night-Herons I had seen when scouting the area a couple of days earlier. We did find a Black-and-white Warbler in with several Yellow-rumps and a Blue-headed Vireo, and heard a couple of Pine Warblers. We concluded the birding at four o'clock. The species count for the day was 65.

On Sunday, a slightly smaller group of 10 went to the Santee Coastal Reserve WMA. Nine of us met in the parking lot of the Quality Inn & Suites in Georgetown to drive to the reserve and added a few birds to the weekend list, including Loggerhead Shrike.

At the WMA entrance, Bill Sullivan, who had arrived there a few minutes earlier, had already located three Red-cockaded Woodpeckers. The bird was a lifer for some – always a good way to start a birding day. We tried to call up Bachman's Sparrows but to no avail – it was, doubtless, too early in the year.

We walked a shortened version of the 5+ miles hike/bike trail. In contrast to Saturday which was hot and calm, Sunday was cool (low 60s) and VERY windy. The impoundments were drawn down very low and the ducks were much less numerous than was the case on this same trip a year ago.

Highlights of the morning included two Bald Eagles, soaring Wood Storks, lots of Blue-winged Teal and shovelers, a few Green-winged Teal and Mottled Ducks, two Anhingas, large numbers of yellowlegs with good views of both Lesser and Greater together, Caspian Terns, Yellow-throated Warblers, Northern Parulas, Blue-gray Gnatcatchers, and Purple Martins (one already "settled" in a gourd near the start of the trail). The strong wind made birding difficult along the dikes and we were very happy to cover the last mile or so sheltered by the trees. We finished birding soon after noon.

The morning's species count stood at 61.

In all, over the one and a half day trip we tallied 96 species, somewhat lower than the 108 reported last year. Several birders in the group added to their life-lists, which always makes a trip successful.

Oregon Birding Trails

Charles Gates

The East Cascades Audubon Society is excited to announce the completion of their state-wide birding site guide. This guide directs birders to over 1,000 birding locations throughout the state. Each location contains the following information: DeLorme Map information, geographic coordinates for those of you who use GPS technology, a Google Map that allows the user to zoom in and out for maximum ease of viewing, a Google Earth link that will give you a satellite view of the site (you can zoom in and out with this tool as well), detailed written instructions on how to get to each site, and a description of what kind of birding you might experience once you locate the site. In addition, many sites have added links to resources like bird lists, site brochures, or alternative activities which are site specific.

All sites are grouped by county. A state map is provided and access to each county is achieved by clicking on the map for that county. Basic information like elevation, county seat, top county listers, and documented rarities are included at the top of each page. A county contact person has been established for each county and this person, when emailed, will provide assistance in birding the chosen county.

County checklists have been developed for each county. The checklists come in two forms: a complete checklist of all documented species in that county and a diluted checklist designed to be more useful in the field. It is thought that the complete checklist will be used as an informational resource by visiting birders and the diluted (brief) checklist will be used as an actual field checklist. The diluted list lacks the county and state rarities that are not likely to show up on an average birding trip to the county. This allows for a much larger font and easier to use, printable checklist.

This is only stage one of this project. An integration with birdnotes.net promises to provide the user with access to additional utilities that are useful to most birders. This process will begin almost immediately and should be fully integrated fairly soon. Other items to be added include species finding guides and "best sites" listings that will help those who have limited time to bird a particular county. The web page is designed to be a living document that will continually change as Oregon birding changes. Input from the general birding public will be used to fine tune and add to the overall document. Suggestions for additions, deletions, or changes will be welcome.

To access the site, go to http://birdingoregon.info/ and click on the county of your choice. Don't miss the additional resource information below the site guide map. Here you will find information about local blogs, birding projects, birding news, Oregon birding organizations, and all kinds of birding information that will help improve your birding experience and birding skills. It's sort of like having everything you need to know about Oregon birding on one page.

We hope you will take a few moments and visit this site guide. No longer will you have to ask for directions to the "birdiest" parts of the state. It's all right here at your fingertips. Over a year's worth of hard work has produced the most comprehensive state site guide in the country. We hope you will enjoy it and participate in the process of keeping it up-to-date and accurate.

Welcome New Members!

Kate Smith
Fayetteville, NC

Eve Turek
Kill Devil Hills, NC

David and Cindy Bell
Cary, NC

Nathan Gatto
Cullowhee, NC

Jim and Mary George
Chapel Hill, NC

Sarah Gilley
Blowing Rock, NC

Shelley Hernandez
Myrtle Beach, SC

Theresa Hill
New Bern, NC

Jane Lareau
Mount Pleasant, SC

Louis Morell
New York, NY

Peggy O'Neil-Ross
Apex, NC

Martin Wall
Eden, NC

Cate Wineburg
Greensboro, NC

"Hope" the Whimbrel Returns to Virginia

Bryan Watts

The December 2010 issue of the Newsletter left "Hope" wintering on sunny St. Croix in the U.S. Virgin Islands. Bryan Watts, Director of the Center for Conservation Biology College of William and Mary Virginia Commonwealth University provides a spring update.

(Williamsburg, VA)---The odyssey of Hope, a Whimbrel carrying a satellite transmitter, continues to amaze scientists. Hope was originally captured on 19 May 2009 on the southern Delmarva Peninsula of Virginia. She left Virginia on May 26, 2009 and since that time has logged more than 21,000 miles (33,000 kilometers) flying between a breeding territory on the MacKenzie River near Alaska and a winter territory on St. Croix in the U.S. Virgin Islands. On Friday, 8 April, 2011, Hope returned to Virginia following a 75 hour, 1,850 mile (2,900 kilometer) flight out over the Atlantic Ocean.

During the course of two full migration cycles, Hope has clearly demonstrated how distant locations are interconnected in the life of migratory species and how their conservation requires collaboration on a multinational scale. For three consecutive springs, Hope has returned to the same creek in Virginia where she has fed on fiddler crabs preparing for a transcontinental flight to her breeding grounds. The creek, located in the Conservancy's Virginia Coast Reserve, is part of the Western Hemisphere Shorebird Reserve Network, a network of international sites considered critical to populations of declining shorebirds. Hope's breeding grounds on the MacKenzie River are part of an International Important Bird Area and one of the areas of highest conservation value in Canada. Efforts are ongoing to protect this area, considered by many to be one of the most pristine watersheds remaining in North America.

For the past two years, Hope has wintered at Great Pond, a Birdlife International Important Bird Area on St. Croix. Protection of long-distance migrants like Hope requires that countries recognize the importance of vulnerable populations and work together toward effective conservation solutions. Hope is one of several birds that have been fitted with state-of-the-art 9.5-gram satellite transmitters in a collaborative effort by the Center for Conservation Biology at the College of William and Mary - Virginia Commonwealth University and the Virginia Coast Reserve of The Nature Conservancy. The goal is to discover migratory routes that connect breeding and winter areas and to identify en-route migratory staging areas that are critical to the conservation of this declining species. Updated tracking maps may be viewed online. http://www.ccb-wm.org/programs/migration/Whimbrel/whimbrel.htm

Satellite tracking represents only one aspect of a broader, integrated investigation of Whimbrel migration. During the past four years, the Center for Conservation in partnership with The Nature Conservancy has used conventional transmitters to examine stopover duration, conducted aerial surveys to estimate seasonal numbers, collected feather samples to locate summer and winter areas through stable-isotope analysis, and has initiated a Whimbrel watch program.

Continued research is planned to further link populations across staging, breeding, and wintering areas. Funding has been provided by The Nature Conservancy, the Center for Conservation Biology, The U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service, the Virginia Coastal Zone Management Program, Georgia Department of Natural Resources, The Toronto Ornithological Club, the Toronto and Region Conservation Authority, and the Northern Neck Audubon Society.

The most recent editions of the Newsletter and The Chat are online on the CBC website. All CBC members will use the same username and password to access these publications. The username is "**member**" and the password is "**birdfun**". This is a membership benefit, please don't share the password with non-members! The password will be changed from time to time, but can always be found in the most recent print edition of the Newsletter.

Go to http://www.carolinabirdclub.org/newsletter to access the Newsletter, and http://www.carolinabirdclub.org/chat to access The Chat.

Cranes

(Continued from page 3)

tailed Grouse perform the ritual that inspired many of the Native American dances passed down from generation to generation. In addition to attracting a trio of birders from North Carolina, the lekking grouse attract a hungry Coyote, but fortunately for all but Wiley, no chickens become breakfast this morning. The show continues after the Coyote's departure until our stomachs remind us that we too are hungry for breakfast.

The next night finds us back in Omaha. Zero speeding tickets, no vehicular mishaps, no wildlife bites, nobody electrocuted, everyone saw the Harris's Sparrows (one from 6 inches away through the glass at Rowe Sanctuary). Coupled with breathtaking views of cranes leaving the Platte in the snowy dawn, finding our "own" Whooping Crane, and enjoying 961 miles of Midwestern hospitality, we can return to Raleigh well satisfied.

If You Go…
Visiting birders might be surprised, as we were, to discover that a trip list for March in Nebraska is not likely to exceed much above 70 species. We tally just under 75, but cheat a bit and grab a few birds in South Dakota on the loop back to Omaha. Professional package tours list about the same number on their trip reports, so for folks planning to visit, this may be a reasonable expectation. We found that, away from the river, birds were scarce, especially when compared to the Southeast where we enjoy a bit more diversity in the winter. Lodging and restaurants are plentiful in Grand Island and Kearney, but even so, reservations should be made in advance for the popular March-April period. Services are more difficult to find north and west into the Sandhills Region, and advance reservations should be made. Reservations for viewing blinds may be made by contacting the following:

Nebraska Nature & Visitor Center (formerly Crane Meadows) for guided Sandhill Crane blind and bridge viewing opportunities: www.nebraskanature.org

Rowe Sanctuary for Sandhill Crane blind reservations: http://www.rowesanctuary.org/

Calamus Outfitters for Greater Prairie-Chicken and Sharp-tailed Grouse viewing: www.calamusoutfitters.com

Book Review

(Continued from page 5)

encountered in nature.

In addition to the benefits of studying what to expect birds to look like in the field, the book contains a couple of helpful features. Three indices allow users to find birds by common name, scientific name, and banding code. The banding code index is an especially handy way to learn those four-letter shortcuts that are often included in internet bird messages. The key to species at the book's front provides another way to learn the banding codes and provides a visual representation of each species size compared to similar birds.

I especially enjoyed trying to determine exactly where some of the background photos were taken. I'm 99% sure I know just the pole on which that Anhinga is sitting (and I suspect many of you have been there as well), and several of the beach scenes should be familiar to many.

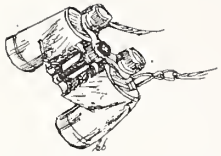
So do you *need* this book? Not in the way that most birders *need* a Sibley or Peterson's guide to learn field marks. Will you want this book? Quite possibly. It is literally like nothing else in the bird guide world and makes a great addition to my library. Upcoming volumes covering birds of western North America and birds of Europe are in the works, so stay tuned!

Did You Know?

"Wisdom", a 60+ year old Laysan Albatross nesting at the Midway Atoll NWR in the Pacific Ocean is once again raising a chick. First banded in 1956, this bird is thought to have amassed more than 3 million "frequent flyer miles"!

Little Bitty Classified Section

For Sale: "Songfinder" Can't hear the high pitches of the warblers or other birds? You need a Songfinder! Call Dan at 919-467-3537 Includes new headphones. $300 See http://www.nselec.com/ for device specifications.



Carolina Bird Club, Inc.
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Upcoming CBC Meetings

Beaufort, SC Sept 29 to Oct 1, 2011
Coastal N.C. Winter 2012

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The *CBC Newsletter* is published bimonthly by Carolina Bird Club, Inc. Founded in 1937 the membership is open to anyone interested in birds, natural history, and conservation. Current dues are: Individual & non-profit, $25; Associate (in household with individual), $5; Student, $15; Patron, $50 and up; Sustaining & businesses, $30; Life, $400; Associate Life (in household with Life Member), $100 (both Life memberships can be paid in four annual installments). Membership dues of $25 include $4 for a subscription to *CBC Newsletter* and $5 for a subscription to *The Chat*. Cost for CBC bird checklists, including postage: 10@$2.50, 25@$6, 50@$11.75, 75@$17.75, and 100@$23.50. Submit application for membership, change of address, and payment for checklists to: CBC Headquarters Secretary, 1809 Lakepark Drive, Raleigh, NC 27612. Copyright © 2011.

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